

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

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**GOVERNOR GRAY DAVIS DECLARES MAY 2001
"DROWNING PREVENTION MONTH"****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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SACRAMENTO - The Department of Developmental Services and the Drowning Prevention Foundation commend Governor Gray Davis for declaring May as Drowning Prevention Month. In California, the leading cause of injury related deaths for children under the age of five is drowning.

In 1998 alone, 84 children under the age of five died in drowning accidents. Drowning accidents occur each year in swimming pools, hot tubs and even five gallon buckets.

In addition to drowning, near-drowning accidents can often leave victims with permanent disabilities. Currently, 516 persons with developmental disabilities receive services in California from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) as a result of surviving near-drowning accidents.

"We are grateful for Governor Davis' support for this most serious topic," said DDS Director Cliff Allenby. "Together, we hope to raise awareness on this potential cause of developmental disability."

Steps to avoid drowning accidents include close and constant supervision of children at all times near water and provision of multiple layers of protection including pool fencing, gates, automatic sliding door closers, pool alarms and automatic safety covers.

Other safety guidelines published by the Drowning Prevention Foundation include the following:

- √ Never leave a child alone near water to answer the telephone, doorbell, to attend to another child or for household chores, even for a few seconds.
- √ Keep a constant eye on young children playing in or near any body of water, wading pool, public pool, bathtub or lake. At large gatherings, designate an adult to watch children at play.
- √ Fence your pool on all four sides with a barrier that is at least five feet high. Move lawn chairs, tables and other potential climbing aids away from the fence to help keep children out.

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- √ Any gate or door leading to the pool area should be self-closing and self-latching, opening outward, with the latch placed on the pool side and out of reach.
- √ Install panic alarms on all house doors and windows leading to the pool area, automatic sliding door closers and an automatic safety cover over the pool. Completely remove cover before children are allowed in the pool.
- √ Drain off water that accumulates on top of the pool cover. A child can drown in as little as two inches of water.
- √ Keep reaching and throwing aids, such as poles and life preservers, on both sides of the pool.
- √ All non-swimmers should wear approved personal flotation devices (life vests) when they are near water and especially near rivers and streams.
- √ Swimming lessons do not ensure safety. About 25 percent of all young drowning victims have had swimming lessons. A child who falls into water unexpectedly may panic and forget his or her swimming skills.
- √ Make sure you and your child's caretakers can swim and know how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in an emergency. Immediate CPR could prevent death or massive brain damage.

Contacts:

*For a free brochure, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Drowning Prevention Foundation, P. O. Box 202, Alamo, CA 94507. Telephone **925/820-SAVE**.*

The American Red Cross offers classes in adult, child and infant CPR. Contact your local American Red Cross chapter for class times and locations.

The proclamation for Drowning Prevention Month is also available on the DDS Internet Home Page: www.dds.ca.gov.

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